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ACTION SS-30

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E.O. 12065: GDS 4/7/86 (CASTRO, RAUL H.) OR-M
TAGS: PINR, PINT, AF, AG, UR, US
SUBJECT: (S) ATTITUDES TOWARD US POLICY AND SOVIET INVASTION OF AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 088475

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. THOUGH DISTUBED BY THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN THE ARGENTINES PERCEIVED IT FUNDAMENTALLY AS AN ISSUE BETWEEN MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON. THIS PAROCHIAL VIEW HAS REMAINED BASICALLY UNCHANGED SINCE DECEMBER AND HAS INFECTED ALL OF ARGENTINA'S RESPONSES.
3. ARGENTINA IS ABOUT AS FAR REMOVED GEOGRAPHICALLY FROM THE CENTER OF THE CRISIS AS POSSIBLE. A COUNTRY WHICH STAYED OUT OF WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II WOULD NOT LIGHTLY BECOME ENMESHED WITH U.S. VIEWS ON THE AFGHAN CRISIS IN THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. BUT CIRCUMSTANCES IN U.S. RELATIONS WITH THIS COUNTRY WERE FAR FROM THE BEST AT THE TIME THE SOVIET CROSSSED THE BORDER INTO AFGHANISTAN. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WAS SMARTING FROM THE WORDS AND THE ACTIONS WE HAD TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO ITS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. THIS CHILLY MOMENT COINCIDED WITH A WARMING TREND IN

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SOVIET ARGENTINE RELATIONS, AS THE ARGENTINES FOUND THEIR ERSTWHILE COMMUNIST ENEMY NOT ONLY A GROWING CUSTOMER FOR ITS AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS BUT ALSO AN ALLY IN INTERNATIONAL FORA WHERE BOTH WERE UNDER ATTACK ON

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HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS. IN THE MONTHS SINCE THE SOVIET INVASION WE HAVE IMPROVED THE CLIMATE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ARGENTINA, PARTICULARLY AS THE RESULT OF THE VISITS OF GENERAL GOODPASTER AND AMBASSADOR SMITH. HOWEVER, AT THE SAME TIME ARGENTINA AND THE USSR HAVE BEEN EXPANDING THE AREAS OF THEIR PRACTICAL COOPERATION--ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, NUCLEAR, FISHERIES.

4. FRAMED BY SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOA HAS BEEN VERY CAUTIOUS ABOUT OFFENDING THE SOVIETS OVER AFGHANISTAN. ITS RESPONSES TO OUR COUNTER MEASURES HAVE BEEN CAGEY ENOUGH TO ESCAPE CHARACTERIZATION. THE INITIAL GOA STATEMENT ON THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN CONDEMNED THE SOVIETS BY INFERENCE, BUT DIRECTLY NAMED NEITHER THE COUNTRY ATTACKED NOR THE INVADER. ON THE GRAIN EMBARGO, ARGENTINA'S "BOTTOM LINE" OF ACTION HAS UNDERCUT US--A COMBINATION OF PRIVATE ASSURANCES AND PUBLIC REFUSAL TO PLAY. WHEN PUSHED TO WHT WALL IN INTERNATIONAL FORA--THE UNGA, THE UNHRC--ARGENTINA HAS SUBMERGED ITS VOTE WITH THAT OF THE VAST MAJORITY CONDEMNING THE USSR. ON THE OLYMPICS IT HAS SUSPENDED ANY DECISION ON WHETHER TO ATTEND, APPARENTLY AWAITING TO SEE WHERE THE MAJORITY--OF AT LEAST OF SIGNIFICANT STATES--FORMS, IN MOSCOW OR ELSEWHERE.

5. IN ONE AREA THERE HAS BEEN A CERTAIN FAVORABLE EVOLUTION OF ARGENTINE ATTITUDES TOWARD OUR POST AFGHAN INVASION MOVES. INITIALLY THE ARGENTINES EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT WE WERE DOING ENOUGH--IMPLYING THAT

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WE WERE NOT AND THEREFORE THAT OUR MEASURES WERE NOT WORTHY OF ARGENTINE SUPPORT. LATER THIS ARGUMENT EVOLVED INTO DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER WE WERE GOING TO "STAY THE COURSE" AGAINST MOSCOW. THE ARGENTINES ALLEGED THEY COULD NOT JOIN US BECUASE WE MIGHT SOMEDAY SOON "LURCH TOWARD DETENTE". WHETHER THE ARGENTINES WERE SINCERE OR SIMPLY OFFERING JUSTIFICATIONS FOR NOT COOPERATING, I BELIEVE AMBASSADOR SMITH'S VISIT HERE HELPED THEM TOWARD GREATER CERTAINTY ABOUT THE U.S. POSITION.

6. WE WILL CONTINUE TO CHIP AWAY AT ARGENTINE ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS BUT I FEAR THEY FIND THE SOVIET BAIT VERY ATTRACTIVE COMPARED TO THE LIMITED OFFERINGS WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE TODAY.

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